Long-term Indo-Russian defence co-operation programme

325. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:
SHRI RAGHAVJI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that existing defence co-operation programme between India and Russia would expire in the year 2000;

(b) whether it is a fact that finalisation of long-term Indo-Russian defence co-operation programme was discussed during the recent visit of Indian Defence Secretary to Russia; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) India and Russia have agreed, in principle, to extend the existing long term programme of military technical co-operation between the two countries up to the year 2010. The draft agreement, which is expected to be signed in the near future, provides for a mechanism for implementing and monitoring the long-term programme of military technical co-operation between the two countries.

Dispute over army briefing to media

326. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:
DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a murmur between the defence bureaucracy and the three services over army briefing to media on Pakistani activities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to resolve the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The defence establishment has a Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) which, among other duties, has the responsibility of interfacing with the media. The DPR organisation has on its staff officers from all the branches of the Armed Forces. This existing institutionalised system is further supplemented by authorised briefings by qualified civilians and/or Armed Forces personnel.

Frequent firing by Pakistani troops at Siachen glacier

327. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL:
SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:
PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:
SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistani troops have been recently resorting to frequent firing at the Indian posts at Siachen glacier to capture the Indian posts;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the number of attempts made by Pakistani troops to capture the Indian posts at Siachen glacier during the last two months or so;

(c) the number of casualties suffered by the Indian and Pakistani forces as a consequence thereof; and

(d) whether any talks have been held, if so, the level at which talks have been held and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Recently Pakistani troops intensified firing on Indian posts in Siachen region. They made 10 attempts to capture Indian posts during September, October and early November 1998. All the attempts were frustrated by our troops. Thirteen to fourteen Pak soldiers were reportedly killed. On our side one soldier was wounded.

(d) A meeting was held between the Defence Secretaries of India and Pakistan in New Delhi on 6th November 1998 in order to resolve the Siachen issue. The discussions were held in frank and cordial atmosphere. The two sides stated their

respective positions on the issue. It was agreed to continue discussions on the issue during the next round of the dialogue process.

Criteria for recruitment of jawans in Military

328. SHRI BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDAR:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that criteria for enrolment of jawans in Military has changed after 1970; and

(b) if so, the criteria which has been adopted and the reasons for the same?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Certain changes have taken place in the criteria for enrolment of slodiers into the Army since 1970 due to changing socio-economic conditions in the country and induction of sophisticated modern weapons/equipments in the Army.

Brief details of changes in criteria for enrolment of Soldiers (GD) in the Army are given as under:—

(i) **Educational Standards:—** The educational standard was enhanced to 10th class pass w.e.f. 1st April, 1986 due to progressive modernisation in the Army and need for effective handling of sophisticated weapons/equipment system of the future. However, dispensation in educational standards have been accorded to certain areas/communities due to socio-economic and educational status prevalent in these regions.

(ii) **Age:—** The minimum age criteria for enrolment into the Army was lowered from 17 to 16 years w.e.f. 13th March, 1984 to give enhanced opportunity of recruitment to potential candidates.

(iii) **Physical Standards:—** The minimum Physical standards have been reviewed from time to time based on various studies and a statistical evaluation of the physical standards carried out by Defence Institute of Physiology & Allied Science as follows:—

(a) **1971:—** Minimum physical standards for specified classed were laid down.

(b) **1978:—** The physical standards based on caste/class were further enhanced.

(c) **1983:—** The concept of caste/class based on minimum physical standards was changed and region based physical standards were adopted.

(d) **1995:—** The region-based physical standards were further enhanced particularly in height.

Induction of Light Combat Aircraft in IAF

329. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) would be ready for its first flight by mid-1999, as reported in the Hindustan Times, dated 12th October, 1998;

(b) if so, by when Government hope to induct Light Combat Aircraft into the Indian Air Force; and

(c) the present assessment of the U.S. Company in this regard who are collaborating with India's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) on the L.C.A.'s digital flight control system and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The first LCA technology demonstrator (TD-1) will be ready for its first flight by mid-1999.